



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: James R. Helmer

SUBJECT: NASCOP WARNING PROGRAM

DATE: 05-22-07

Approved

/s/

Date

05/25/07

BACKGROUND

On March 6, 2007, the City Council directed staff to discontinue the use of the Neighborhood Automated Speed Compliance Program (NASCOP) as an enforcement program; and to report back to the City Council as part of the 2007-2008 budget process on modifying NASCOP to a warning program.

The 2007-2008 Proposed Operating Budget includes a budget savings proposal to eliminate NASCOP due to the current economic environment facing the General Fund.

ANALYSIS

The NASCOP program has been an integral part of the City's Traffic Calming Program for almost 10 years. It has been effective in reducing the level of speeding in many residential neighborhoods and school areas, especially vehicles speeding excessively over the posted speed limit. Due to legal concerns about the use of automated enforcement camera systems for the purpose of speed enforcement on California roadways, the use of NASCOP as an enforcement tool has been discontinued. The City is pursuing legal and legislative options to reinstate the program.

The NASCOP Enforcement (E) program consisted of three vans staffed by 5 positions (Traffic Checkers and Engineering Technicians) and supported by a contract with Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. (Redflex) to provide noticing services, a customer service call center, software support and maintenance of the photo-radar equipment. It served 177 neighborhoods at its peak in 2007, at a yearly cost of approximately \$430,000. NASCOP (E) also served as an educational tool at schools, as over 50 of these neighborhoods included school zones. NASCOP (E) generated approximately, \$80,000 in citation revenue for a net cost of \$350,000 per year.

Warning Program Alternative

A NASCOP Warning (W) program could be implemented with two vans and 3 positions (Traffic Checkers). With a warning program, only one notice would be mailed to the registered owner of

ANALYSIS (CONT'D.)

the vehicle captured speeding. A photograph of the license plate would be embedded in the notice. Although Redflex services would still be required to provide software support and equipment maintenance, the Department of Transportation (DOT) could provide the services associated with the customer service call center and noticing with program staff.

A NASCOP (W) program would cost the City approximately \$270,000 per year to operate. Such a program is unfunded at this time. If funded in 2007-2008 or later years, the vans would be primarily assigned to school zones and be used as part of a more comprehensive engineering, education and enforcement program. During non-school hours the vans would be used in residential zones known to have a history of speeding occurrences. The vans would also support the efforts of the Police Department in conjunction with annual safety campaigns.

Although it is anticipated that if only warnings are issued, NASCOP would have a lessened impact on reducing speeds, there are potential options to increase the effectiveness of a warning program including:

- Lowering the existing threshold at which notices are sent to registered owners observed speeding, especially in the vicinity of school zones. This would make the program more noticeable and serve as a greater educational tool.
- Equipping the vans with a radar speed feedback sign on the rear of the vehicle to provide immediate notice to motorists of their speed, which will also serve as a real-time deterrent to speeding.
- Including informational material with the notice on the negative impacts of speeding, especially in school zones and residential neighborhoods.

2007-2008 Proposed Operating Budget

The 2007-2008 Proposed Operating Budget includes revenue enhancements and service reductions to offset the General Fund shortfall. In order to meet reduction targets, DOT considered many services and programs, and proposed reductions with the least regulatory, legal, and community service impacts.

With the elimination of NASCOP (E), there may be an increased level of speeding on some of the streets that are currently served by the program. Although a warning program could help to minimize these impacts, it would require \$270,000 annually in General Funds. At this time DOT is not proposing further budget reductions to accommodate the formation of a NASCOP (W) program, but if the General Fund revenue picture improves, this information is being provided so that Council will know the approximate cost to institute a NASCOP (W) program. DOT will continue to examine our organization and staffing levels and determine if there are any meaningful ways to start-up a NASCOP (W) with existing resources, and if so we would coordinate with the Attorney's

Office and bring a recommendation to Transportation and Environment Committee before commencement.

If the City Council approves the elimination of the NASCOP (E) program, there will be ongoing General Fund savings of approximately \$430,000. These savings were used by DOT to meet next year's budget goal. The savings results from elimination of the following:

- Personnel Costs. The vans are staffed by 3 full-time positions and 2 part-time positions, of which one of the part-time positions is currently vacant. Efforts will be made to re-deploy staff to other positions in the City. (\$303,000)
- Vendor services. The contract with Redflex was executed in November 2004, with four one-year options to extend. The existing contract expires November 30, 2007 and includes provisions for the City to cancel the contract, without cause, upon 30 days written notice. It is recommended that the contract term remain in effect through November 2009 to enable the City to readily reinstate the NASCOP program should efforts to obtain legislation supporting the use of photo radar for speed enforcement purposes be successful. Redflex would not be paid under the terms of the contract, unless the NASCOP program is reinstated in either a warning or an enforcement program. (\$99,000)
- Other Non-Personal/Equipment costs. In addition to the vendor services, there are miscellaneous costs associated with supplies and materials and vehicle operation. (\$28,000)

The three vans and associated photo-radar equipment are proposed to be retained in DOT while legislation is being explored. At least one of the vans would be equipped with a wireless computer workstation enabling its use as a mobile office by engineering and technician staff. While conducting field investigations, staff would be able to remotely access various traffic data from the central databases at City Hall, and/or send digital pictures, counts, and drawings back to supervisory staff in the office to maximize their efficiencies in the field. Funds to upgrade and operate the van(s) would be absorbed within DOT's allocated budget.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the Police Department and the City Manager's Budget Office.

/s/
JAMES R. HELMER
Director of Transportation